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PRESS RELEASE



City of Norman
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HOME SAFE HEATING

The Norman Fire Department is urging caution and asking the public to practice safe heating behaviors as the peak time for home heating fires continues; half of all home heating fires occur in December, January and February.

Heating equipment continues to be the second leading cause of home fires behind cooking and the second leading cause of home fire deaths behind smoking.

“Half of fatal home space heater fires started because something was too close to the heater and ignited. **Keep heaters and things that can burn at least three feet apart,**” said Fred Henderson Fire Marshal for the City of Norman. “Heating fires and the deaths they cause can usually be prevented with awareness and a few simple actions.”

The leading factor contributing to space heater fires in general was heating equipment too close to things that can burn, such as upholstered furniture, clothing, mattress, or bedding. Other leading factors contributing to home space heater fires were failure to clean, which is principally related to creosote build-up in chimneys, and leaving an operating space heater unattended.

“Whether your chimney supports a wood or coal stove or just a fireplace, be sure to have it cleaned and inspected at least once a year to reduce your risk of having a fire,” added Henderson. “And always turn off a portable space heater when you go to sleep or leave the room.”

The Norman Fire Department offers the following safety tips:

Heating

- Have a three-foot “kid-free zone” around open fires and space heaters.

- Supervise children when a fireplace, fire pit, or other space heater is being used. Use a sturdy, metal screen to prevent contact burns, which are even more common than flame burns.
- All heaters need space. Keep things that can burn, such as paper, bedding or furniture, at least 3 feet away from heating equipment.
- Use heating equipment that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Never use your oven for heating.
- Install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters or central heating equipment, according to the local codes and manufacturer's instructions.
 - Have a qualified professional install the equipment.
 - Make sure all fuel-burning vented equipment is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. CO is created when fuels burn incompletely. CO poisoning can cause illness and even death. Make sure the venting for exhaust is kept clear and unobstructed. This includes removal of snow and ice around the outlet to the outside.
- Install and maintain carbon monoxide alarms to avoid risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected annually by a qualified professional.

Portable electric space heaters

- Turn heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room.
- Use and purchase portable space heaters with an automatic shut off so if they're tipped over they will shut off.
- Place space heater on solid, flat surface.
- Plug power cords directly into outlets and never into an extension cord.
- Inspect for cracked or damaged, broken plugs or loose connections. Replace before using.

Fuel burning space heaters

- Always use the proper fuel as specified by the manufacturer.
- When refueling, allow the appliance to cool and refuel outside or in a well-ventilated area.
- When using the heater, open a window to ensure proper ventilation.
- In portable kerosene or other liquid-fueled space heaters, always use the proper grade of the proper fuel.
- All new unvented gas-fired space heaters have an oxygen depletion sensor that detects a reduced level of oxygen in the area where the heater is operating and shuts off the heater before a hazardous level of carbon monoxide accumulates. If you have an older heater without this feature, replace it.
- If the pilot light of your gas heater goes out, allow 5 minutes or more for the gas to go away before trying again, do not allow gas to accumulate, and light the match before you turn on the gas to the pilot to avoid risk of flashback.
- If you smell gas in your gas heater, do not attempt to light the appliance. Turn off all the controls and open doors and window. Call a gas service person.

Wood burning stoves

- Install the stove, chimney connectors and chimneys following manufacturer's instructions or have a professional do the installation.
- Wood stoves should bear the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- In wood stoves, burn only dry, seasoned wood. In pellet stoves, burn only dry, seasoned wood pellets.
- Start the fire with newspaper or kindling, never with a flammable liquid, such as lighter fluid, kerosene or gasoline.
- Keep the doors of your wood stove closed unless loading or stoking the live fire.
- Allow ashes to cool before disposing. Dispose of ashes in a tightly covered metal container and keep the ash container at least 10 feet away from the home and any other nearby buildings. Douse and saturate with water.
- Chimneys and vents need to be cleaned and inspected at least once a year.

For more information, contact the **Norman Fire Department** at (405) 292-9780.

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